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CASE STUDY

Irrigation Project Pacifies a District

An irrigation project rescued an ailing farming district from drought, floods, and disputes about water resources



Photo: USAID/ODG/CADG

A 170-meter reinforced concrete irrigation weir, or check-dam, across the Khashrod River regulates the flow of historically unruly waters.

CHALLENGE For decades, poor irrigation, annual flooding, and severe drought plagued Nimroz Province's Chakhansor District, depleting its agricultural capacity. The Khashrod River provides the lion's share of the district's limited water resources. These waters, however, often caused more harm than good, regularly flooding surrounding villages suffering from inadequate irrigation infrastructure.

INITIATIVE To improve farming capacity and flood protection, USAID implemented an irrigation rehabilitation project in the district. The project was also designed to bring peace to feuding Chakhansor communities by addressing the irrigation needs of both northern and southern villages. By diverting the annual overflow into the canals via the dam and intakes, floodwater that once destroyed villages would be transformed into irrigation water to save ailing farmland.

RESULTS The project achieved its objectives and increased irrigation access for 7,200 homes. Working with district elders and 1,500 local laborers, USAID rehabilitated 300 km of canals and rebuilt a 170 m reinforced concrete check-dam across the seasonally dry Khashrod River that maintained water flow for three months this year and diverted water through the rehabilitated canals to irrigate local wheat and melon crops.

Chakhansor's first post-project wheat and melon harvests yielded outputs three times greater than pre-project averages. "USAID has created an agricultural revolution in Chakhansor," noted Central Asia Development Group's Nimroz provincial manager. "Before this year, melons were imported from other provinces. This year, Nimroz is exporting them."

The project also drew the community together. When insurgents from the northern villages threatened to attack worksites, Pashtun elders from both the north and south warned insurgents that they would be reported to authorities if any attack or disruption were to befall the project. No further threats were made.